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ABSTRACT

A study examined the likelihood of using compliance-gaining strategies when engaging in safe-sex situations. A sample of 110 college students from a large midwestern university completed a 16-item questionnaire that utilized G. Marwell and D. Schmitt's compliance-gaining typology. Results indicate that female college students were significantly more likely than males to use nine of the strategies: threat, expertise-positive, expertise-negative, aversive stimulation, self-feeling-positive, self-feeling-negative, altercasting-positive, altercasting-negative, and altruism. Findings suggest that males and females differ somewhat in their use of compliance-gaining strategies when engaged in safe sex situations. Future research should investigate specifically the content of the communication. (Two tables of data are included; 22 references and the survey instrument are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Safe Sex and Compliance-Gaining Strategy Usage Among College Students

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Abstract

This study examined the likelihood of using compliance-gaining strategies when engaging in a safe-sex situation. A sample of 110 college students from a large midwestern university completed a 16-item questionnaire that utilized Marwell and Schmitt's (1967a) compliance-gaining typology. Results indicate that male and female college students differ significantly in their likelihood to use nine of the strategies: threat, expertise-positive, expertise-negative, aversive stimulation, self-feeling-positive, self-feeling-negative, altercasting-positive, altercasting-negative, and altruism. Future research should consider looking at the communication exchanges between partners that couches the use of compliance-gaining strategies.

Safe Sex and Compliance-Gaining Strategy Usage Among College Students

Introduction

"People spend a lot of time trying to get others to act the way they want and people vary in the methods they use to do this" (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967a, p. 350). How a person influences another or attempts to engage another individual in the act of compliance-gaining is an area of research that can be applied across a variety of contexts. In this paper, we will examine how a safe sex context and the use of compliance gaining strategies are intertwined.

Review of Relevant Literature

Compliance-gaining

When examining compliance-gaining, it is necessary to look at other terms as well. The definitions of power and social control lead to compliance-gaining. Although the three definitions differ somewhat, they are not entirely unrelated because all three terms embrace the ability to affect another person's behavior (Richmond, Davis, Saylor, & McCroskey, 1984).

French and Raven (1959) define power as the ability to influence an individual's psychological field, including behavior, opinions, attitudes, goals, needs, and values. Five major types of power identified by French and Raven (1959) were referent, expert, reward, coercive, and legitimate power. Like French and Raven (1959), Etzioni (1975) conducted a study of

compliance from a power perspective (Garko, 1990). The agent, according to Etzioni (1975), always has more power than the target in all situations. The three basic types of power or applications of power that he posits are coercive power, remunerative power, and normative power. Whereas Etzioni's theory dealt with types of compliance, Weinstein and Deutschberger (1963) dealt with a technique of social control referred to as altercasting. In altercasting, agents try to get targets to play the roles provided by the agents.

Out of power and social control arises compliance-gaining. Compliance is a relationship that results between those who possess power and those over whom it is exercised (Etzioni, 1975). "A compliance-gaining strategy is a form of symbolic behavior designed to shape or regulate the behaviors of others" (Schenk-Hamlin, Wiseman, & Georgacarakos, 1982, p. 82). When an actor selects a message designed to appeal to the target, the actor will choose one that is most likely to elicit the desired response (Schenck-Hamlin et al., 1982).

Marwell and Schmitt (1967a) built upon these previous ideas (i.e., Etzioni, 1975; French & Raven, 1959) and carried out a study using a large sample of college students who were told to imagine themselves in four situations (job, family, sales, roommate) in which they acted as agents trying to gain compliance. Students indicated how they would accomplish compliance by selecting one of the 16 possible strategies provided.

The taxonomical work of Marwell and Schmitt (1967a) was only conducted on "situational stimuli involving short-term relational consequences" (Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1977, p.43), so Miller et al. (1977) extended Marwell and Schmitt's (1967a) work by applying the 16 compliance-gaining strategies to two interpersonal and to two non-interpersonal situations. They found a preference for the use of a positive tactic called "liking" across all four situations. In interpersonal situations, reward-oriented strategies and activation-of-commitment strategies with positive connotations (e.g. altruism, positive esteem, and positive altercasting) were reported to be the most likely used. In non-interpersonal situations, strategies involving logical argument were emphasized.

Miller et al. (1977) also found that in non-interpersonal situations, more strategies were used. They suggested this may be because it is more difficult to predict the target's responses when the actor doesn't know the target very well. In this kind of uncertain situation, the actor would tend to use as many resources (tactics) as possible. The use of compliance-gaining strategies varied between the type of goal (long-term vs. short-term) as well (Miller et al., 1977). Pro-social strategies were found to be more frequently chosen over all situations, and anti-social strategies, when used, tended to be used in non-interpersonal situations (Miller et al., 1977). Cody and McLaughlin (1980) also found situational dimensions to affect the selection of influence strategies.

Communicating about AIDS

The results of these studies, then, give credence to the idea that situational contexts should be taken into account in the study of personal influence attempts. One such situational context is any sexual activity. Sexual activity is not only perhaps the most intimate act between two individuals, but in this day and age of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), could be considered one of the most dangerous. Cline, Freeman, and Johnson (1990) concluded that "general talk about AIDS has no clear link for efficacious AIDS prevention behaviors" (p. 803). In a later study, Cline, Johnson, and Freeman (1992) found that there are four groups of people who talk or don't talk about AIDS: safe sex talkers, general AIDS talkers, nontalkers, and want-to-be talkers. Safe sex talkers engage in interaction about prevention, condom use, sexual history, and/or monogamy with their sexual partners. General AIDS talkers discuss AIDS-related topics, but not in the context of personal relationships. Nontalkers will not talk about AIDS with a sexual partner nor do they express a desire to do so. Finally, want-to-be talkers have the desire to engage in AIDS-related interaction, but have never done so.

Even so, there is evidence to suggest that college students do talk about AIDS, but the rate of such interaction is low. Cline et al. (1992) reported that nearly two-thirds of their respondents stated that they had discussed AIDS, but only one-third actually did so in the presence of a romantic relationship.

Bowen and Michal-Johnson (1989) concluded that 56% of their respondents who were involved in a relationship mentioned AIDS to their partner. Schneider and Morris (1991) found that among sexually active college students, only one-third had discussed the topic of sexually transmitted diseases with their partner. However, the notion that "women, more often than men, reported having discussed AIDS with a sexual partner" (Cline et al., 1990, p. 803) has been supported by other research (Bowen & Michal-Johnson, 1989; Cline et al., 1992).

It is interesting to note that while college students may not discuss the issue of AIDS, there is evidence to support the claim that college students are knowledgeable about AIDS (Stiff, McCormack, Zook, Stein, & Henry, 1990). Manning, Barenberg, Gallesse, and Rice (1989) surveyed students at a university health care facility and concluded that their knowledge of AIDS was "generally good" regardless of the respondent's gender or religion. Yet, students who possessed a low knowledge about AIDS indicated that the perceived barriers to practicing safe sex were higher than those students who possessed a higher knowledge about AIDS. Burnette, Redmon, and Poling (1990) found that college students were generally knowledgeable about AIDS and AIDS transmission, but did not express concern about contracting the disease. Those who appear to most worry about contracting AIDS are those people who reported having between two and five sexual partners (Severn, 1990), which appears to be the "lifetime average" for most people (Darling & Davidson, 1986).

Rationale for the study

Thus, it appears as if college students, while knowledgeable about AIDS (Burnette et al., 1990; Manning et al., 1989; Stiff et al., 1990), do not discuss the issue (Bowen & Michal-Johnson, 1989; Cline et al., 1990; Cline et al., 1992; Schneider & Morris, 1991) as comprehensively or as candidly as they could. One plausible reason is that young adults thrive on risk-taking. Schneider and Morris (1991) state that this is basically because young adults feel invulnerable and invincible, and "during the second decade of life teenagers engage in a series of risky behaviors because they feel invulnerable to the consequences of their action" (p. 575). As a result, their sexual behaviors will have a direct impact upon their communication behaviors.

A look at the compliance-gaining literature suggests that situational variables will affect the communication behaviors as well. Throughout the compliance-gaining literature, evidence suggests that the type of action chosen is influenced by the hierarchical positions of the messages sender and receiver (Stohl & Redding, 1987). Neumann (1992) examined the perceptions that males and females have about each other's tendency to use compliance-gaining strategies. He discovered that males perceived a higher frequency of usage among both females and males than females perceived. In addition, Neumann (1992) reported that the use of a particular strategy was dependent upon the gender of the seeker. Our first hypothesis states:

H1: There will be a significant difference in the use of compliance-gaining strategies between males and females.

Because it has been reported that females generally discuss AIDS with a sex partner more frequently than males (Bowen & Michal-Johnson, 1989; Cline et al., 1990; Cline et al., 1992) and because differences in compliance-gaining have been perceived between the genders (Neumann, 1992), our second hypothesis is:

H2: In a safe sex situation, females will use compliance-gaining strategies at a higher rate than males.

Method

Subjects

The subjects (N=110) were students enrolled in an introductory speech communication course at a large midwestern university. Subjects who participated in this study received a research point which was credited toward the successful completion of the course.

Fifty-four (N=54) males and 56 females participated in this study. The mean age of the participants was 19.759 years of age. The mean classification in school was freshman standing, with 51 of the respondents falling into the freshman category. Thirty-one (N=31) of the subjects classified themselves as sophomores, 19 of the subjects classified themselves as juniors, and nine (N=9) classified themselves as seniors.

Procedures

Each subject was asked to complete a 16-item questionnaire

that measured whether the participant would be likely to use compliance-gaining strategies when engaging in a safe-sex situation. A question that used each one of the sixteen strategies originally developed by Marwell and Schmitt (1967) was phrased in a hypothetical statement. For example, the "promise" strategy was couched in the following manner: "I would promise a reward if my partner will comply."

Using a seven-point Likert scale, participants were asked to indicate how likely each of the sixteen strategies would be utilized by himself or herself. The directions called for the interaction to be a safe sex situation, and did not specify whether the relationship was heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. The sixteen statements and the response scale were modeled after an instrument used previously by Neumann (1992). The reliability of this scale was assessed at .8871 (Cronbach's alpha).

Analysis of data

Because our primary purpose was to examine if gender differences exist when it comes to safe-sex and the use of compliance-gaining strategies, t-tests were performed to determine these differences.

Results

A t-test was performed to discover if differences between the cumulative scores of male and female subjects were statistically significant. Our first hypothesis was supported ($t = -2.89$, $df = 108$, $p < .05$). This finding suggests that males

and females differ in their likelihood to use these strategies in a safe sex situation. Table 1 contains more information.

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insert Table 1 about here

T-tests were also performed on each of the sixteen strategies to determine if males and females utilized these strategies differently. For the most part, our second hypothesis was supported. Of the sixteen strategies, nine strategies were significantly different: threat, expertise-positive, expertise-negative, aversive stimulation, self-feeling-positive, self-feeling-negative, altercasting-positive, altercasting-negative, and altruism. This suggests that females are more likely than males to use these nine strategies when attempting to gain compliance from a sexual partner. Table 2 illustrates these findings.

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insert Table 2 about here

The use of the remaining six strategies--promise, liking, pre-giving, debt, moral appeal, esteem-positive, and esteem-negative--was not found to be significantly different.

Discussion

In this study, females reported that they would be more likely to use threat, expertise-positive, expertise-negative, aversive stimulation, self-feeling-positive, self-feeling-

negative, altercasting-positive, altercasting-negative, and altruism. Males, on the other hand, reported that they would less likely use these strategies. In contrast to Neumann (1992), the perceptions of what strategy would be used is different from what would be used. In his study, males perceived females as being more likely to use liking, pre-giving, aversive stimulation, debt, and moral appeals. Clearly, perceptions and actual usage do not correlate.

It should be noted that, in this study, participants were asked to note what strategy they would use in a safe sex situation. According to Marwell and Schmitt (1967b), these strategies can be used only if the person asking for the compliance has the capability and credibility that such use would require. Thus, it appears as if the participants noted that for each gender, it is possible for males and females to engage in similar compliance-gaining strategy usage, although the likelihood of such usage might vary.

A post-hoc analysis of the mean scores for each of the sixteen strategies illustrates that the females' reported mean was higher in all strategies except for liking, pre-giving, and debt. While these are not significant differences, it does suggest that perhaps men might engage in these three strategies more so than women. One note of interest is that Neumann (1992) found that males perceived females to be more likely to use these strategies.

Overall, it can be concluded that males and females do

differ somewhat in their use of compliance-gaining strategies when engaged in a safe sex situation. Perhaps the next step in this line of research is to investigate specifically the content of the communication. In addition to asking if the strategy will be used, the exact comment needs to be elicited. For example, when asking "I would promise a reward if my partner will comply," we also need to inquire about the nature of the reward and ask the respondent to supply a written statement about the content.

In addition, attitudes toward communication and communicating about AIDS needs to be explored in conjunction with compliance-gaining. If the assumption is made that those who engage in safe-sex talk (Cline et al., 1992) are more honest in talking with their partners about their sexual history and sexual experiences, then perhaps it might be these individuals who would use compliance-gaining strategies to persuade the partner to engage in safe sex. Sexual experience of the seeker might also prove to be a mitigating factor. Severn (1990) states that "persons with a great deal of sexual experience seem to have formed strong attitudes prior to the AIDS epidemic and are not yet willing to accept the present situation" (p. 305).

In any case, Neumann (1992) concluded by saying that "a future step in this line of research is to investigate whether or not these perceptions bear any correlation to actual behavior" (p. 7). In this paper, we have shown that perceptions of compliance-gaining behaviors and compliance-gaining behaviors, when involving participants in a safe sex situation, do not correlate.

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Table 1

T-test of Groups

VARIABLE		NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	STANDARD ERROR	F VALUE	2-TAIL PROB.	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
C1	PROMISE									
	GROUP 1	54	3.0185	1.986	.270	1.19	.531	-.99	108	.325
	GROUP 2	56	3.4107	2.164	.289					
C2	THREAT									
	GROUP 1	54	1.6852	1.451	.198	2.00	.013	-2.08	108	.040
	GROUP 2	56	2.3929	2.051	.274					
C3	EXPERPOS									
	GROUP 1	54	4.3148	2.247	.306	1.92	.018	-3.85	108	.000
	GROUP 2	56	5.7500	1.621	.217					
C4	EXPERNEG									
	GROUP 1	54	4.1111	2.560	.348	1.32	.311	-2.18	108	.032
	GROUP 2	56	5.1071	2.229	.298					
C5	LIKING									
	GROUP 1	54	4.5926	1.620	.220	1.59	.091	.11	108	.912
	GROUP 2	56	4.5536	2.044	.273					
C6	PREGIVE									
	GROUP 1	54	3.2963	2.006	.273	1.10	.723	.16	108	.870
	GROUP 2	56	3.2321	2.106	.281					
C7	AVERSTIM									
	GROUP 1	54	2.0000	1.801	.245	1.32	.309	-1.35	108	.180
	GROUP 2	56	2.5000	2.071	.277					
C8	DEBT									
	GROUP 1	54	2.3148	1.892	.257	1.00	1.000	.48	108	.635
	GROUP 2	56	2.1429	1.892	.253					
C9	MORAPP									
	GROUP 1	54	2.0000	1.441	.196	1.52	.128	-1.91	108	.059
	GROUP 2	56	2.5893	1.776	.237					
C10	SELFPOS									
	GROUP 1	54	3.6852	2.135	.291	1.15	.619	-3.38	108	.001
	GROUP 2	56	5.0179	1.995	.267					
C11	SELFNEG									
	GROUP 1	54	2.6296	1.825	.248	1.13	.659	-3.27	108	.001
	GROUP 2	56	3.8036	1.939	.259					
C12	ALTERPOS									
	GROUP 1	54	2.3889	1.837	.250	1.19	.526	-2.20	108	.030
	GROUP 2	56	3.1964	2.004	.268					
C13	ALTERNEG									
	GROUP 1	54	1.8148	1.442	.196	1.66	.065	-2.15	108	.033
	GROUP 2	56	2.5000	1.859	.248					
C14	ALTRUISM									
	GROUP 1	54	3.5185	1.969	.268	1.19	.524	-2.45	108	.016
	GROUP 2	56	4.4821	2.149	.287					
C15	ESTPOS									
	GROUP 1	54	2.2963	1.755	.239	1.47	.161	-.88	108	.380
	GROUP 2	56	2.6250	2.128	.284					
C16	ESTNEG									
	GROUP 1	54	1.7222	1.265	.172	2.02	.011	-1.17	108	.243
	GROUP 2	56	2.0714	1.798	.240					

Table 2

T-tests of Gender by Compliance-Gaining Strategy

T-TESTS FOR INDEPENDENT SAMPLES OF SEX GENDER OF PARTICIPANT

GROUP 1 - SEX EQ 1: MALE
GROUP 2 - SEX EQ 2: FEMALE

VARIABLE	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	STANDARD ERROR	F VALUE	2-TAIL PROB.	T VALUE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	2-TAIL PROB.
COMPSAFE									
GROUP 1	54	45.3889	16.066	2.186	1.53	.125	-2.89	108	.005
GROUP 2	56	55.3750	19.846	2.652					

Appendix A

Describe how likely you are to use the following strategies in order to persuade your partner to engage in **safe sex.** I am interested in how you would approach a situation that involves only **sexual activity that is safe.** If you do not engage in sexual activity, indicate how likely you would be to use the following strategies.

1. I would promise a reward if my partner will comply.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

2. I would threaten some form of punishment if my partner will not comply.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

3. I would point out the advantages that my partner will gain by complying.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

4. I would point out the disadvantages that my partner will gain by not complying.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

5. I would act friendly to get my partner in a good "frame of mind" before asking for compliance.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

6. I would reward my partner in some way before asking for compliance.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

7. I would punish my partner until compliance is gained.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

8. I would bring up past situations to show that my partner "owes" me and therefore should comply.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

9. I would make the argument that my partner is somewhat immoral if compliance is not gained.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

10. I would tell my partner that he/she will feel better if compliance is gained.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

11. I would tell my partner that he/she will feel worse if compliance is not gained.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

12. I would tell my partner that a person with "good" qualities would comply.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

13. I would tell my partner that a person with "bad" qualities would not comply.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

14. I would tell my partner that I need his/her compliance very badly, and that he/she should do it for me.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

15. I would tell my partner that others will think better of him/her if compliance is gained.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely

16. I would tell my partner that others will think worse of him/her if compliance is not gained.

very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very likely